United Nations S/PV.5091

Security Council
Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

5091st meeting
Tuesday, 30 November 2004, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Danforth	(United States of America)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Spain	Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa

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04-62684 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa, and Permanent Representative of France.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I would like to welcome the return of members of the Council and of the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Central Africa.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa.

Mr. De La Sablière (*spoke in French*): From 21 to 25 November, the members of the Security Council visited Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Uganda, in that order. The purpose of the mission was to assess the progress of the Congolese and Burundian peace processes and the implications for the region. It was also an opportunity to recall the Security Council's support for those processes and for the two United Nations forces that are assisting them.

It also enabled the Council — which has been closely following those two situations and which in recent months has taken decision to strengthen the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), now the largest United Nations mission, and to create the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) — to send a number of messages: messages of encouragement, and also the message that it is necessary to step up and accelerate efforts in both of those countries, along with a message concerning the implementation of regional commitments.

Our terms of reference were clear and precise. The fact that they were known in advance facilitated the mission's work. This effort at transparency and communication, in fact, amplified the Council's message when we arrived on the ground. I think it is a good practice. I would add in my preliminary comments that this was the right time to carry out this mission. Council members will recall that we decided on this mission in principle several months ago; we then set the date in consultation with the two Special Representatives.

I believe we could not have chosen better. The mission was part of the regional cooperation effort, which was relaunched with the Great Lakes Conference, convened from 19 to 20 November in Dar es Salaam. As well, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, we were part of the strong support for the action being carried out at a key moment in the process by Carolyn McAskie and Bill Swing, whose work on the ground we greatly appreciated.

It was a key moment because in both countries the transition process is entering its final stage. We were able to discuss that situation, which is rather delicate to manage, with President Kabila and President Ndayizeye, as well as with the other, most directly concerned players. In Kinshasa and Bujumbura, the Governments and the Parliaments are now committed to preparations for the elections. That was the mission's context.

The written report of the mission will be distributed today, or tomorrow at the latest. I think it goes right to the heart of the matter. It includes an account of each of the mission's stages, as well as a set of conclusions and recommendations. On that basis, the Council will convene a public meeting in a few days, in which the representatives of the countries visited, as well as the States and organizations most concerned, can speak following the members of the Council. It will certainly enrich the Council's discussion to know their reactions.

Today, however, on behalf of the mission, I would like to thank the Heads of State, President Kagame, President Kabila, President Ndayizeye and

President Museveni, who received us at length, as well as the main actors in the transitions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, with whom we met. The mission was welcomed everywhere with great interest, which reflects the attention that is given to the Council's positions and action.

I would now like to discuss our analysis. The report of the mission to be distributed makes a distinction between the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that of Burundi. The two situations are different and have their own logic, history and pace. However, in today's initial oral presentation, which by definition is brief, I would like to focus on a certain overall vision, which might be useful for the Council, and give my general impressions, which, I believe, are shared by other members of the mission.

I would like to begin by saying that we came back encouraged, even though much remains to be done. We were encouraged because each of us, following the meetings we had with both Congolese and Burundian officials, felt there was a widely shared determination to move to elections. I would add that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the local population in particular desires elections, which constitutes an additional responsibility for the principal actors of the Congolese transition. In Burundi, the spirit of reconciliation and power-sharing has made amazing progress.

We have come back encouraged also because, when we compare the situation today to what we saw during our last mission, in June 2003, we see the extent of the progress achieved. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the institutions of the transition have been established and have begun their work. There were high and low points, but the incidents in Bukavu and Kinshasa last May and June have been overcome. In Burundi, a general ceasefire has been concluded. Calm prevails over 95 per cent of the territory apart from what is called rural Bujumbura, where the Forces nationales de libération are still rampant. In Burundi, the framework for the end of the transition and the post-transition period has largely been agreed, and the people are to adopt the constitution by referendum on 22 December.

Thus, we are encouraged, but that should not conceal our sense that nothing has been finished yet, because the difficulties and obstacles should not be underestimated.

A telling example of that is that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the text of the constitution has still not been agreed upon. That is disturbing. In both countries, much legislative work remains to be done — although it is more advanced in Burundi — not to mention the preparation of electoral lists. As we have told both our dialogue partners, there is no time to lose, even though they should continue to favour dialogue. It is the responsibility of the Congolese and the Burundians to properly carry out the transitional process. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the presidential authority must further its dialogue.

For its part, the international community engaged in the two countries must be able to exert effective influence. To that end, better use must be made of the mechanisms for coordination in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as desired by the International Committee in Support of the Transition, which calls for the establishment of the second and third joint commissions, as decided in September in New York. I believe that our message was understood.

My third general comment is that it is equally crucial that the elections scheduled for next year — and those dates must be respected — should not be jeopardized by new outbreaks of violence. That has been the aim of the Council's efforts for the past six months in deploying the United Nations Operation in Burundi and strengthening the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). That is also the reason behind the efforts expected of the authorities of Kinshasa and Bujumbura in the area of disarmament and the restructuring of the defence and police forces.

In that regard, much remains to be done in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The creation of new integrated brigades — 10, if possible, before the elections — and a significant integrated police force are a priority. That requires the support of the international community, which must remain mobilized. Several countries have agreed to make a significant contribution to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in those areas. That is essential. In Burundi, things are more on track; it is now a question of will and determination.

My fourth general remark is, how can we not be struck by the fact that peace remains fragile in the region? Instability, which is particularly appreciable in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, should not jeopardize the process under way.

The problem represented by armed groups was raised with all the heads of State. The presence on Congolese territory of former Armed Forces of Rwanda (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe Rwandan rebels is first and foremost a problem for the Congolese themselves because of the suffering it causes the people. Furthermore, the possibility of organizing elections in the Kivu depends on the resolution of that problem. It has become a problem also for Burundi, because the FNL is receiving support in the Congo from the ex-FAR and Interahamwe. It is, of course, a problem for Rwanda as well. We have acknowledged that fact, even if the Council does not have the same assessment as the Rwandan authorities as to the magnitude of the threat.

In any case, this problem must be resolved, with the support of MONUC for the Congolese army — in keeping with MONUC's mandate — in the spirit of cooperation and confidence that must characterize relations among the countries of the region, with full respect for State sovereignty. That was the thrust of the statement issued by Council members following the threat of military action coming from Rwanda.

Let me reiterate that all the members of the mission believe that this problem should be resolved quickly. We mentioned that fact in our recommendations as well as the implementation of confidence-building mechanisms among States, which is crucial.

The regional dimension of certain problems makes it clear that the success of the Great Lakes Conference must now be followed up by the swift implementation of the Dar es Salaam Declaration by establishing priorities.

I would like to make a few final comments.

We must begin thinking about the post-electoral period, because the elections are not an end in and of themselves. Stability must be maintained following the elections. We have often made mention of this, because the Congolese and Burundian peoples, who have suffered greatly, deserve such stability. They deserve also to embark once again on the path to development, with the support of the international community.

Impunity must be combated with the utmost resolve; the peoples of the region deserve no less. The region has experienced a great many human rights violations, and that challenge is currently being taken up. I believe that the Security Council has work to do in that area. It must think about the steps that should be taken with respect to the FNL, a movement that is committing atrocities and that is opposed to the peace process. The Council would also be moving in the right direction if it acts as soon as it receives the report of the Secretary-General concerning the establishment of an international judicial commission of inquiry in Burundi.

Those were the comments I wanted to make while awaiting the report of the members of the mission, which, as I said, will be issued shortly. I would like to thank them for their support and for the spirit that prevailed in our work. I believe that, during the course of the week, we made clear the unity of the Security Council — a unity that is crucial to the effectiveness of its action in the region.

The President: I thank Ambassador De La Sablière for his briefing.

On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all members of the Security Council mission, which was very ably led by Ambassador De la Sablière, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibility on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.